

Race, identity and support in initial teacher training

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Race, identity and support in initial teacher training

Abstract

This article examines the experiences of twenty two Black and minority ethnic trainee teachers who were enrolled on a secondary teacher training course at one university over a two year period. It argues that BME trainee teachers experience different forms of exclusionary practices in the classroom, but use their identities in a positive way to reinforce aspects of their experiences.

Key words

teacher training, race, diversity.

1. Introduction

There have been some significant advances in race equality in higher education in recent years. Recent data from the Higher Education Statistics agency (HESA) suggests that participation in higher education for BME¹ students continues to increase overall (HESA, 2014). However, there are marked differences by ethnic group; analysis from the 2011 census suggests that those from BME backgrounds are more likely to have a degree level qualification or equivalent compared to their White counterparts (Lymperopoulou and Parameshwaran, 2014). Lymperopoulou and Parameshwaran's (2014) analysis shows that those from Gypsy or Irish Traveller, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Black Caribbean and White groups were less likely to have degree level qualifications (or equivalent) compared to those from Chinese, Indian and Black African backgrounds. The authors suggest that, '...across all age groups members of ethnic minority communities were more likely to have degree level qualifications than people in the White British group' (2014, 3). However, BME groups are less likely to attend prestigious universities compared to their White counterparts. The Elevations Trust Network (2012) suggests that there are more Black students studying at one institution (the University of East London) than the top twenty higher education institutions combined. Other research suggests that some BME groups are more likely to attend their local university which has a greater mix of students from similar ethnic and social backgrounds (author ref, 2010). ITT (initial teacher training) presents a different picture. The numbers of BME students registered on such courses remains low and there is a clear mismatch between the ethnic backgrounds of ITT students compared to the numbers of BME pupils attending schools (DfE, 2013). This article examines the experiences of twenty two BME students who were enrolled on a secondary Post Graduate Certificate in Education

¹ Black and minority ethnic (BME) refers to those who identify as Asian; Pakistani, Bangladeshi or Indian or Black; African or Caribbean. It also includes those who identify as Chinese and those from a mixed heritage background. For this article, the term BME is used to refer to individuals whose parents or grandparents originated from India, Pakistan or Bangladesh (Asian) and the Caribbean or Africa (Black).

(PGCE)² teacher training course at one university over a two year period in England, UK. I examine respondents' views on how teaching as a career is understood by BME communities and the impact of such views on entry into the teaching profession, and the type of support BME trainee teachers receive. I argue that BME trainee teachers experience different forms of exclusionary practices related to their identities in the classroom. However, many use their identities in a positive way in which to reinforce aspects of BME experience and history in the classroom Furthermore, many respondents suggest targeted support for specific BME trainee teachers during and after their course would be beneficial, particularly in relation to greater chances of employability once they leave their course.

2. Initial teacher training and race

In England, the numbers of students on ITT courses are collected through the School Workforce Census which was introduced by the Department of Education in 2010. The School Workforce Census collects information from all publicly funded schools including local authority maintained schools, Academies and City Technology Colleges. School Workforce Census data suggests that those registered on ITT courses in England tend to be White and female (DfE, 2013). Recent data for 2013/14 shows that a total of 79% of new entrants to primary ITT courses were female compared to 21% who were male. A similar pattern exists for those registered on secondary ITT courses, 62% were female and 28% were male. In 2013/14 BME entrants for both primary and secondary ITT courses comprised 12% of all students compared to 88% who were White.

² The PGCE is a one year course which exists in England, Wales and Northern Ireland for individuals who have an undergraduate degree who want to train as primary or secondary school teachers.

There has been a great deal of research which has explored the experiences of BME students on ITT courses such as facing barriers to their progression (Maylor, 2009; Osler, 1997); an expectation that BME teachers should focus on particular courses (such as multiculturalism), that they will provide specific support for BME pupils (such as for English language) (Basit *et al*, 2006) and an expectation from their colleagues that they will serve as role models for BME pupils (Maylor, 2009). Early research pointed out the persistent racism experienced by BME students on placements and inadequate procedures by schools for dealing with such incidents (Siraj-Blatchford, 1999). Such findings have also been confirmed in more recent studies (Basit and Roberts, 2006; Gillborn and Mirza, 2000). Other research has outlined the anxiety that BME students experience in relation to the potential for racism in predominantly White schools, and the impact this has on their performance in the classroom (Carrington and Tomlin, 2000). More recently, Gillborn (2005; 2006) has explored the impact of Whiteness on educational policy making and how many policies work to minimise the impact of racism.

3. Legislation

In England, Public bodies such as OFSTED³ are required to promote race equality as part of the requirement of the Equality Act (2010) and the Race Relations Amendment Act (2000). As a result, several reports have been published by OFSTED which address good practice regarding race equality and the monitoring of racist incidents in schools (OFSTED, 2005; 2009). However, despite these policy changes there is evidence to suggest a significant gap between ITT government policy making on race equality and the enactment of such policy (Wilkins, 2014). Wilkins suggests, ‘...that race equality issues are marginalised within institutional policies that focus on procedural compliance rather than substantive challenge to

³ OFSTED (Office for Standards in Education) is an independent body in England which regulates and inspects services which provide care for children and young people and reports directly to parliament.

practices that normalise and so perpetuate structural inequality' (2014, 445). Furthermore, those engaged in teacher training must be conscious of the impact of racism within schools and provide suitable, effective support mechanisms for trainee teachers who experience racism.

4. Teacher and student identities

There has been a great deal of research which has examined the relationship between teacher and student identities. Research suggests that there is a clear mismatch between teachers and students regarding an understanding of issues associated with race and ethnicity. This has been identified in Australia, in which the teaching population has been identified as predominantly White and middle class (Allard & Santoro, 2006) and similarly in the USA (Chubbuck, 2010; Milner, 2010). Concerns have also been highlighted about the ability and willingness of trainee teachers to understand issues associated with race, diversity and inclusion (Grant and Sleeter, 2011; Nieto, 2010), and that some teacher training programmes that try to incorporate diversity into their training are simply 'add ons' that do not deal directly with issues of inclusion (McDonald, 2005). Furthermore large numbers of trainee teachers report that they are inadequately prepared to work in culturally diverse settings (Kohli, 2014).

Much of the literature points to racism, low expectations and discrimination against BME students in the classroom which has significant impacts on school experiences (Nieto, 2010). Research also suggests that teacher education programs operate in racialised spaces in which Whiteness is privileged (Brown, 2014; Sleeter, 2001). Ladson-Billings (2009) has argued that

trainee teachers should be prepared to teach in socially just and culturally responsive ways and face their own racism so that such practices and beliefs are not perpetuated in their own teaching. Ulucci (2011) suggests that teacher's relationships with students are crucial to inform a shared understanding of race in order that race is included as part of their teaching practice (Brown, 2014; Milner and Howard, 2013). Moreover, research has found that BME students demonstrate increased levels of achievement when they are taught by teachers of similar racial, cultural and linguistic backgrounds to themselves or those who have a greater understanding of these issues (Milner, 2012). Milner and Howard state that, '...given the present racial divide in schools between teachers and students it is imperative for teacher education programs to complicate and intensify the utility of race in their recruitment, retention and support of teacher education practices and policies' (2013, 536).

Research in the UK has also pointed to the important contribution that BME teachers make to the learning experiences of all children, specifically for those from BME backgrounds (Davies and Crozier, 2006; Wilkins and Lall, 2011). The literature suggests that trainee teachers continue to experience racism, marginalisation and exclusion in the classroom. Furthermore, some trainee teachers are not fully equipped to teach in racialised spaces in which their understandings of difference and diversity can impact on their teaching styles. Author ref and an other have outlined how trainee teachers' understanding of race is complex and multifaceted and that greater training is needed to assist trainee teachers in their understanding of diversity and racism in the classroom. 'While trainee teachers were able to articulate their own understandings of their identity and the identity of others, it was evident that there is a need for a greater engagement in the issue of identity and its multiple forms as well as a better integration of these issues within the ITT curriculum' (2014, 17).

5. The Research

This article examines the experiences of twenty two BME students who were enrolled on a secondary PGCE teacher training course in one university. All students on the course were asked if they defined themselves as BME and if so, whether they would be interested in participating in the research. All respondents who identified as BME agreed to participate in the study over a two year period. Given the small numbers of BME students who enrol at the university, it was necessary to select two years to ensure an adequate sample size. Twelve students who were enrolled in the academic year 2012-13 participated in the study and ten in 2013-14. The main aims of the study were:

- To understand how BME teaching as a career was understood by BME communities, ,
- To analyse the impact of such views on entry into the teaching profession and
- To identify the types of support BME trainees received.

Currently the Secondary PGCE course at the university recruits approximately 6% of candidates from BME backgrounds, whereas national targets to increase the diversity of the ITT workforce in England are 12% (data from 2012-13 DfE, 2013). The university is considered a ‘traditional red brick’⁴ university located in the South of England. In its advertising material it highlights its ‘long tradition of achieving excellence in research and teaching’. The university population (both staff and students) is overwhelmingly White and the majority of students enter university through the traditional ‘A’ level⁵ route. All of the

⁴‘Red brick university’ is a term used to refer to the six civic British universities founded in the major industrial cities of England that achieved university status before World War I. All were originally established as science and/or engineering institutions. Each of the six red bricks are members of the prestigious Russell Group of universities which are renowned for their excellence in research and teaching.

⁵ The Advanced Level General Certificate of Education (‘A’ level), is a qualification offered by education institutions in the UK. A-levels are studied over a two-year period and are recognised as the standard for assessing the suitability of applicants for entrance to academic courses in UK universities.

participants who participated in the study were from BME backgrounds; twenty were female and two were male⁶. Five of the respondents were Black Caribbean, four were Black African, five were Pakistani, four were Indian, one was Bangladeshi background and three respondents described themselves as mixed race (Black/White heritage). The interviews were digitally recorded and the data transcribed. Each interview lasted on average one hour. The data was analysed using thematic analysis and indexed in relation to particular themes and categorised (Roulston, 2001). The focus was on generating themes from the data to explore the different discourses trainee teachers used to discuss the key factors associated with their experiences of ITT as a BME student.

6. The findings

Identity and difference

The trainee teachers reported that they had all been welcomed in their schools and even though they were often the only BME teacher in the school, this did not have a negative impact on their experiences. Being the only Black teacher in a school had some positive consequences and in some respects indicated a degree of respect from some students and fellow teachers. One trainee reported that selecting to teach in a less ethnically mixed part of the city was part of a project to challenge her to teach; another reported that the selection of where to teach was based on an academic decision rather than a choice to be in a particular environment. A British born Black Caribbean female student (Jacky, year 2012-13) spoke of the positive aspects of her identity in relation to how she was seen by the students and the

⁶ The small number of males is similar to the student population on ITT courses at the case study university, which is predominantly female.

teachers. She was placed in a school which was predominantly White (in terms of students and teachers).

I think it depends how you look at it [how you are seen] because I know that the teachers and the students see it as positive me being in this school. There is only one other teacher here who is not White and she is Asian. My being here is seen as a positive contribution, I know that I can bring aspects of my own culture and background to the setting and I also know that I can have some positive input about Black culture.

For Jacky, the aspects of 'Black culture' that she felt she could bring to the job included the teaching of black role models, the relevance of Black history and focussing on an 'Afrocentric' approach.

I think as a Black person, you can bring your own background to the job and teach the students things that you wanted to know about yourself [as a Black person] that you were not taught. For me, this means bringing an Afrocentric perspective into the classroom - but this perspective should apply to *all* the students and not just the Black students. The Afrocentric approach is about including Black aspects of culture that are sometimes forgotten about and not taught in the national curriculum. It is something that would help students to understand the contribution that Black people have made to society and there are many contributions they have made. The issue is that most children are not really taught about them in schools. More needs to be done so that an Afrocentric approach becomes part of the curriculum.

Many other Black trainee teachers talked about a specific 'Black' approach to their teaching and suggested that they could use teaching as a mechanism by which they were able to

emphasise the positive aspects of Black identity and history. They emphasised that this would benefit students from all ethnic backgrounds.

Becky (year 2013-14) on the other hand spoke about how her Black identity had a negative effect on her experience as a trainee teacher.

It was weird, because I was in an all-White school when I went in some of the students were a bit rude. They did seem to stare at me and point at me and that made me feel uncomfortable and it made *me feel* aware about my own identity. If they had not done that, it would not have bothered me or affected me. It was almost like they were not used to seeing a Black person before. I stood out because of my Black identity, I was different and so they didn't know how to treat me [original emphasis].

Becky also felt that because she was made to feel that she was different by the pupils. Consequently, she wanted to ensure that she presented herself positively to ensure that the pupils would have positive images of Black communities.

I did kind of feel that I had to always be on my best behaviour and it was like – well this might sound a bit ridiculous – but it was like I was representing all Black people! So I had to be good and professional, because I didn't want these students – or the teacher, my colleagues – who may not have seen or worked with a Black person before – to think that we [Black people] are not very good and are not professionals. So, yes you could say, there was an added pressure on me! I wanted them to have positive, good stereotypes of Black people.

As trainee teachers, many respondents felt they wanted to ensure that they behaved professionally at all times, since they felt they were representing their communities and

wanted to ensure that positive images of their communities were portrayed. Some referred to the negative media stereotypes attributed to Black communities and the influence these had on pupils in the classroom.

Many respondents said that they had not experienced discrimination from their colleagues; it was the students who often expressed negative attitudes towards them. Sheila (year 2012-13) who was from a Black Caribbean background reported a negative relationship with her White mentor, but it was not clear whether this was attributed to her ethnic background.

There is something there that he doesn't like me, he always seems to disregard what I have to say and isn't that supportive. I don't know whether this has anything to do with the fact that I am Black or whether it has something to do with a personality issue, but he doesn't make me feel comfortable. So I am afraid to ask him things that I know others could ask him and that makes me feel as though I could be disadvantaged. I don't know what it is, but I don't want to immediately say it's because I'm Black.

On the whole, the majority of respondents had positive, supportive relationships with their mentors. Brenda (year 2013-14) a Black African woman said,

I think the mentors and all other teachers in the school are very good and very supportive. I think they want me to be here and they are very helpful to me when I have things I need to ask them. I would say my experiences have been positive. If they had been negative, that would make me want to think about whether teaching is for me. If I felt that every time I went into a school or a classroom that I was going to experience negative behaviour from people, that would worry me and make me think if I should be doing this job.

Farah (year 2012- 13) on the other was placed in an inner city school with a diverse intake. However, Farah felt uncomfortable in some situations because of her Muslim background and because she wore a headscarf.

When I first went to the school, I did get some strange looks from the pupils, there was this thing that I was an 'unknown' which is surprising because I consider this city to be quite diverse and multicultural but there was still the issue that I was different to them [the students]. Because I wear a headscarf it is immediately apparent what my religion is, you can immediately see that. There is no hiding the fact and so that visibility is always there. Sometimes that visibility did make me feel very different and did make me stand out. But some of the pupils may not understand my religion.

Both Jacky and Farah felt different because of the reactions they received from pupils, their visible presence affected how they were treated. However, Farah points out that she was treated positively by her colleagues.

I didn't feel as though I was treated any differently or in a negative way by the teachers and other staff – they were fine. I didn't see them as anything other than being inclusive and also supportive to me. It was the pupils who made me feel uncomfortable. As a Muslim and as someone who makes that obvious – because of the way I dress – society will make certain judgements about you and you have to deal with that. They wouldn't say things directly to me, because they knew they could get into trouble. They would often make certain remarks and say things in a general sense. Some students had never met or spoken to a Muslim person before and to have that person in the role of the teacher may be confusing for them.

Whilst many of the respondents did not necessarily report overt discrimination or racism, they did report the presence of subtle nuances of 'difference'. As Farah went on to say,

If this is the first time that pupils and teachers have seen or even met a Muslim person, then I have to make sure I give them a good impression of that. I don't want them to have those stereotypes of Muslims that exist in the media. I want them to understand that their teacher is and can be a Muslim and can be different. At the same time, that teacher can be good at their job.

It is important that individual and cultural differences are acknowledged and celebrated in the classroom, so that the classroom is not seen as a homogenous space. Kohli (2014) argues that stereotypes in the classroom can act as powerful forms of racism which work to disadvantage those from BME backgrounds and trainee teachers have to unlearn internalised racism that exists in schools. Similar findings have also been found in previous research which suggests that if race is not acknowledged in the classroom or the curriculum this impacts on how racial differences are seen by pupils and trainee teachers (Kohli, 2014). For many respondents, their 'presentation of self' (Goffman, 1959) manifested itself in their clothes and dress, but also in their professionalism towards pupils and their colleagues. The 'presentation of self' had a significant impact on how they were judged and the extent to which they were able to ensure their acceptance within the school space. Many of the respondents placed a great emphasis on 'the presentation of self', particularly because of their understanding of it in relation to representing their own communities. Their identities manifested in a positive and professional manner which were linked to their degrees of acceptance by pupils and colleagues.

Teaching as a profession

Respondents discussed how teaching as a profession was not highly valued in some BME communities. Kuldip (year 2012 -13) who was from an Indian Sikh background emphasised

how in the Indian Sikh community teaching as a profession was not respected compared to other professions such as law or medicine.

A lot of my cousins have gone into medicine or law and taken that route. Teaching is seen as something that you do if you can't get into those subjects like medicine and law; it's not respected in our communities. There does seem to be a perception that teaching is an easy thing to do. It's also seen as an easy route to an easy profession, whereas medicine and law are seen as hard and as subjects for those who are clever. There is a lot of bias in how certain professions are seen and how they are valued, especially in the Asian community.

Kuldip was adamant that stereotypes of teaching as a profession in the Asian community were related to gender in which teaching was seen as an extension of the female caring role.

I don't think there are many Asian men who decide to become teachers, there are very few and I don't know any to be honest. That is probably to do with how teaching is seen – as a female profession. There seem to be lots of women on this course and there are lots of female teachers in my placement school. It doesn't seem to be a profession that attracts many men and there certainly aren't any Black or Asian men that I have seen. I have also heard lots of female teachers in my placement school saying that one of the reasons they like it is because they it helps them with their own childcare. They can drop and pick their children at school as they also finish at the same time and for some of them their children might be at the same school where they teach.

Monica (year 2012 -13) a Black trainee teacher had different views.

I think that teaching is respected in our Black Caribbean communities; it is seen as a worthwhile job and one that has status. You are seen as having achieved something. But the gender element is interesting, because Black Caribbean men don't go into teaching and I don't know why that is. I think there has to be positive Black role models in the classrooms so that the boys who are teaching now can look at these Black male teachers and think this is a good profession to go into. But for Black women it is considered a respectable profession, it is seen as one that is linked to education and so that makes it respectable. I think we need to have more Black men in teaching, but I don't know how you can encourage them to do that.

Monica whose father was an academic and mother taught in a further education college, was adamant that family background had an influence on the type of professions that young people decided to pursue.

The family is so important and for some of these young Black children they don't have a positive male role model and so they think they can't achieve. That's why we need to have more Black men in the classroom, to provide that positive role model. It's important that all children see Black men in this way – White children as well – so they won't have stereotypical views of Black men. If your parents are from certain backgrounds they will value education and push you towards certain subjects, if your parents do not have aspirations themselves then the children will suffer. But as teachers, we have to ensure that those pupils who don't come from certain backgrounds where education is important are also given the support so that they can succeed.

Monica felt that one of the ways in which Black men could be encouraged into teaching was through increasing the status of the profession, offering adequate support and mentoring during training and guidance when seeking employment. Many respondents mentioned the various types of support they received during their training, but they also recognised that different kinds of support were needed for BME trainee teachers. Some spoke about career progression and pointed to the lack of head teachers from BME (and female) backgrounds. Research does suggest that teaching is often seen as a female career which requires a high level of communication skills and a career in which women are more likely than men to value positive relationships with colleagues and the opportunity to combine childcare with their employment (Ashby *et al*, 2008; Barmby, 2006; Drudy, 2008; Francis, 2008). Purcell *et al* (2005) have identified relationships between gender, subject choice and reasons to go into teaching. Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest that the presence of BME teachers (particularly men) in classrooms can help to prepare BME children (and others) to become highly literate and culturally competent in the classroom (Lynn and Adams 2002).

Types of support

Although many of the trainees spoke about the positive aspects of their course, they all agreed that more support would be beneficial for them. There was a fear that if adequate support did not exist it would be easier for trainees to leave teaching. Some aspects of support that trainees mentioned were specifically targeted at BME communities in order to encourage them to consider teaching as a career, particularly for BME men. Respondents also indicated that universities and partner schools should be specific in terms of the type of support they could offer to BME trainees. Many of the trainees mentioned that schools and universities should be aware that racism was an issue that existed in schools and that there should be

systems in place for it to be dealt with effectively and adequately. Maya (year 2012 -13) spoke about the different types of diversity events she had attended and the impact they had on her teaching experience.

The university runs different types of diversity events for students and these very helpful and valuable. They are good because they address diversity and equality aspects and all the students have to go to them, they have no choice. That way, it seems that diversity is seen as something we all have to grapple with – not just if you're Black or Asian. They provide very useful information and the input about race is excellent. But I think universities should still be doing more so that ethnicity and religion are seen as part of the main agenda. I am not sure how they can do that, but it will also help to improve the numbers of BME students on the courses, particularly BME men.

Many respondents felt it was important to have a balance in terms of the support being offered, it should be informative and not exclusive. Some respondents suggested that issues such as race and inclusion should not be seen as being tokenistic, or an 'add on', rather they should be embedded in the entire PGCE course and part of ITT. Another aspect of support that was identified by students was the need to retain students once they had joined the course.

I know at least one person [from a BME background] who has left the course because they couldn't cope. If this happens then the tutors should try and do what they can to help that person; first of all not to leave and if they are having problems, finding out what those problems are so that they can be helped. It could be that students from Black or Asian backgrounds are leaving courses and they get missed or that when the tutors find out there is nothing they can do about it.

Other universities provided support for students who were struggling, but respondents pointed out that for this support to be effective, it had to be culturally sensitive to the needs of BME students.

I think the university has to be sensitive in its approach because for some people it could be something to do with their culture or their religion that's stopping them from being able to do the best that they can and this has to be addressed in the proper way. The students have to let staff know if there is an issue and once staff are aware they have to act on it. There may also be issues in schools that could be culturally sensitive and it is the tutors who should consider these and then think about how they can deal with them.

Once students had left the course, some were worried about employment. Having invested a great deal of effort and loss of income (some of the students had left full-time jobs to join the course), getting a job at the end of the course and being able to use their qualification was extremely important for them. On the one hand BME trainees wanted clear guidelines and support (just like other trainees) in how to maximise chances of gaining employment after they had completed their course. On the other hand, they had specific types of support they needed – which was related to their ethnic identity.

Conclusions

This article has examined the experiences of twenty two BME students who were enrolled on a secondary PGCE teacher training course in one university, over a two year period. The article argues that many BME students continue to experience feelings of racism, exclusion and marginalisation in the school setting. However, despite these experiences of being

positioned as ‘others’ and ‘outsiders’, the majority of respondents use their ethnic identities and positioning in a positive way and do so to challenge the racism they experience. Many reported that they were keen to teach in schools which were predominantly White as they were able to use their BME identities to reinforce positive role models of BME communities whilst emphasising an ‘Afrocentric’ approach in their teaching, particularly to engage and motivate students to question difference. The majority of respondents felt that an ethnocentric experience of teaching was the norm and so used their own identities to reinforce aspects of BME history in their teaching. Consequently, they felt their role was to ensure that aspects of race and ethnicity were acknowledged and celebrated in their teaching curriculum. The research suggests that a greater acknowledgement of aspects of identity, difference and racism is needed in the school setting in order that BME trainee teachers are recognised as individuals and also as members of ethnic communities who can contribute to the educational experiences of all pupils in schools.

Whilst many of the respondents emphasised differing views about how teaching was valued in BME communities as a profession, the majority recognised that greater change was needed for the inclusion of BME men into the teaching profession. This was related to the different types of support that could be offered not only to encourage those from BME communities to enter the profession (particularly men), but also strategies for retention and guidance and training when seeking employment.

This study supports previous research which suggests that students from all backgrounds should be encouraged to discuss openly their experiences of racism and their respective positioning as Black or White trainee teachers so that such issues can be used to explore how racism impacts on teaching practice (Brown, 2014). This study also supports previous

research which has found trainee teachers experience racism in the UK (Davies and Crozier, 2006; Kohli, 2014; author ref and an other). Kohli's (2014) research suggests that trainee teachers felt that critical dialogues about internalised racism within teacher preparation programs were crucial to develop pedagogical practice that challenged racial inequality. Furthermore, Kohli (2014) argues that respondents felt this was important in developing racially just classrooms which considered equality and diversity in teaching. Research has also suggested that BME teachers can use classroom spaces to question the links between knowledge and power and use their own background and knowledge to inform and create a positive inclusive curriculum (Lynn and Adams, 2002). For BME teachers, 'we must create research and teaching strategies that acknowledge racial minority teachers as insiders to the experiences of racism in schools, and as valuable assets to the fight for educational justice' (Kohli, 2009, 250). Yet at the same time, care has to be taken so that trainee teachers can build on these experiences, rather than simply leading towards reinforcing stereotypes (Milner, 2012). The ultimate aim of education should be to try and tackle inequalities in education and to provide equal access to all students (regardless of their ethnic or class backgrounds) (Nieto, 2010) and when addressing stereotypes, trainee teachers must question their own pedagogy and practice when thinking about how some BME pupils are failing in the education system (Kohli, 2014).

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